

To Senator Daniel Akaka and the United States Committee on Indian Affairs,

Please find below the written testimony of Alvin N. Parker, Principal of Ka Waihona o ka Naauao Public Charter School, for the oversight hearing on “In Our Way: Expanding the Success of Native Language & Culture-Based Education” on Thursday, May 26, 2011, beginning at 2:15 p.m. in room 628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

Mahalo,

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Ka Waihona o ka Naauao (KWON) is located on the Wai`anae Coast, the western side of the island of O`ahu. The Wai`anae community, as many Native American communities, has experienced rampant alcohol, sexual and substance abuse, early teen pregnancy, a large percentage of Native Hawaiians incarcerated, and the disintegration of family and Native Hawaiian values due to the above listed social maladies. The mission of Ka Waihona o ka Na`auao is to create socially responsible, resilient and resourceful young men and women by providing an environment of academic excellence, social confidence and cultural awareness. Because of this, KWON embraces a curriculum that is both academically rigorous and culturally sensitive.

KWON houses opened ten years ago in an educationally altered chicken coop with 60 students in grades kindergarten through three. Currently, there are 572 students in 24 classrooms in grades kindergarten through eight on a traditional school campus. Of our students, 93% are Native Hawaiian and 62% are economically disadvantaged. Each class has an educational assistant in addition to a classroom teacher which allows for a lower student-teacher ratio and more effective classroom management. KWON provides a core curriculum of language arts, social studies, science, and math along with resource courses that include music, art, language, physical education, and culture.

The school is in good standing with the No Child Left Behind federal mandate and has made Annual Yearly Progress for four of the last six years. KWON's founder formed the school with the strong belief that education is the most effective way to remedy the maladies of a community. This belief is at the heart of the school's efforts to foster a more community inclusive form of education, an integrated curriculum, and an academically rigorous educational experience, along with measurable outcomes set at the highest standard. KWON offers a schooling experience that is a viable alternative to the existing conventional public school model. KWON is structured to be responsive to the learning styles, cultural values, and future desires of the families of the community. It emphasizes a caring, collaborative

environment for all persons within the school community. This includes students, teachers, parents, staff, volunteers, and community members who, together, implement an effective and relevant educational experience.

KWON is founded on its Na Mea Waiwai or Core Values: Ho'ihi (respect), Kuleana (responsibility), Malama (safety), Ha'aha'a (humility), Lokahi (unity), and Ho'omau (perseverance). A set of posters displaying these school values is displayed in every room on campus to allow for easy reference and frequent discussion. The exposure and substantive support by the faculty to make these values a part of everyday lessons and behavior expectations is integral to the school's approach to education and ultimately the school's mission. Students participate in a host of cultural activities throughout the school year. These include honoring the native rulers of the past at the Royal Mausoleum (burial place), displaying their knowledge in a cultural show for the community, participating in a day of festivities which include activities ancient Hawaiians conducted on a daily basis for survival, weekly hula classes, daily Hawaiian language classes for middle school students, and a daily schoolwide protocol that includes a variety of Native Hawaiian chants and songs including Hawaii Pono, our state song. KWON exposes students to native Hawaiian values and offers them opportunities to participate in a culture which is beneficial to their social maturation. The combination of a cultural component and an intensely rigorous academic curriculum provides the students with a solid base that allows for a social mobility that is often not a reality for native Hawaiians. Education, whether it be cultural or academic, plays a vital role in nurturing and sustaining our native people.

KWON's Hawaii State Assessment scores have steadily improved since the school's first taking of the HSA in 2005. In the most recent state assessment data (2009), where 300 is passing, KWON scored a 303 in reading and a 288 in math. This is an improvement from 296 in reading and 280 in math in 2008. KWON was able to meet AYP this year and is now in School Improvement Year One, Good Standing, due to the consistent gains in each class and grade level, especially in mathematics. This is remarkable considering only one other public school in the district met AYP. The surrounding community's schools house eight of the 10 lowest scoring schools in the state. The schools in the same district have consistently struggled to make gains on state tests. In SY 2009-10, KWON met the school's goals set in SY 2008-09. KWON moved 10% of students in each reading standard up to higher standard by moving 8 Students move from Well Below standard to Approaching standard, 6 Students move from Approaching standard to Meets standard, and 11 Students move from Meets standard to Exceeds standard. We were also able to move 10% of students in each math standard up to higher standard by moving 12 Students move from Well Below standard to Approaching standard, 7 Students move from Approaching standard to Meets standard, and 6 Students move from Meets standard to Exceeds standard. All teachers use the same assessments and are using the data from those assessments to drive instruction.

KWON implements Guided Reading Groups and Literature and Inquiry Circles in grades Kindergarten through eight. KWON supports these Guided Reading Groups and Literature and Inquiry Circles with a number of Big Books, Shared Reading Kits, Internet Sources through SmartBoards and other technology rich sources, the Accelerated Reader Program (a daily progress monitoring software assessment for monitoring the practice of reading), STAR Reading (standardized computer adaptive assessment) from Renaissance Learning (which works hand in hand with Neo IIs and Notebook software), A to Z Readers (materials to teach guided reading, phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, reading fluency, alphabet, and vocabulary through professionally developed downloadable leveled books, lesson plans, worksheets, and reading assessments), Leveled Reading Libraries for grade levels K-8, and many Hawaiian culture books, which assist in teaching our curriculum's cultural component.

All teachers, parents, and students sign an annual school compact and middle school parents stay in close contact with instructional staff through the TeacherEase program. The middle school implements Teacherease, which systematized our 7th and 8th grade classrooms through standards-based lesson plans, curriculum mapping, gradebooks, report cards, and parent communication/access. The website enhances

teacher collaboration and improves communication between administrators, teachers, parents, and students. We also use the portion of the system that provides demographics, attendance, and scheduling assistance. The various supports for KWON students include the following: in class technology tutoring through Accelerated Reading and Math, Reading Fluency Software, skill specific online programs, daily grade updates and communication with parents, counseling services, and Title I and IDEA support. Kindergarten through sixth grade employs a Standards Based report card.

During instruction, lower elementary teachers focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, and differentiation with pre-decodable and decodable books. KWON employs Small Group Instruction through Guided and Shared Reading on a daily basis. Teachers also use listening centers, Author's Chair, and Reader's and Writer's Theatre daily as another teaching strategy that easily allows for differentiation. Literature and Inquiry Circles are used for focused critical thinking sessions to introduce and break down new material and allow students to learn from one another through collaborative groups. Middle and upper elementary teachers create project-based, interdisciplinary, independent research projects in order to promote non-fiction reading and writing, internet familiarity, and independent work. Science, math and reading journals are conducted daily in classrooms. Students also work in small groups using strategies such as role playing, think/pair/share, and jigsawing.

Teachers differentiate using multi-sensory, multiple intelligence lessons in order to engage each student in the classroom. Teachers also differentiate according to student ability using skill specific work they have created or by using differentiated items provided by KWON's curricular programs. Formative assessments are employed frequently in the form of self-assessment and goal setting, peer assessments, observations, reviews, summarizing, and exit cards.

KWON uses software and online programs such as Lexia, My Reading Coach, Reading Plus, and Fluent Reading Trainer as supplemental supports for students in order to instruct in a differentiated, skill-specific format. These programs are scientifically proven and data driven allowing students to be frequently assessed and support students until mastery. Teachers are able to access assessments and further drive instruction through worksheets and 1:1 or small group instruction. The programs are designed to support students experiencing difficulty with reading. In addition, low achieving students participate in one-to-one sessions with teachers and educational assistants using skill specific, leveled readers, computer programs, and manipulatives. During the summer prior to kindergarteners beginning school at KWON, students attend a mandatory session in which teachers assess students and meet with parents in order to introduce the entire family to KWON's expectations.

Singapore Math is implemented in grades kindergarten through eight as a core math curriculum. Singapore Math's method of teaching mathematics is based on textbooks from the national curriculum of Singapore. It is based primarily on time-tested traditional mathematics instruction methods. Singapore Math frequently uses word problems and the strategies towards solving them, rather than repetitive drilling. Singapore Math also frequently uses models in teaching problem-solving (a form of pre-algebra) rather than the trial-and-error methods. This method is a problem solving strategy which simplifies the list of 11 or more problem solving skills suggested by the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM).

KWON supplements the curriculum with Accelerated Reading and Accelerated Math which are research-based computer programs that produce high gains in reading and math for students of different achievement levels in all grades. The program creates custom-designed practice assignments for students based on a computerized diagnostic test, scores their work, and reports the results immediately. The classroom teacher is then able to work with individual students on their particular skill strengths and weaknesses. Students work at their own individual levels and are given practice time to achieve proficiency. Teachers set realistic, achievable math goals with students for optimum growth using this program. Teacher use program reports and feedback for planning instruction, diagnosis of student needs, and also to provide information for parents.

KWON's technology rich supports include MacBooks, listening centers, Samsung doc cameras, I-Pod

Touch System, MacBooks, Elmos, Ipads, Neo II Boards, and SmartBoard Technology. The programs are used for reading & math instruction which increases test scores through multi-sensory literacy and math comprehension strategies, vocabulary and language development, and repeated reading/math practice. Programs are scientifically proven, skill specific, differentiated, and current, best practice.

KWON uses a three tiered RTI model. Tier I consists of general education (curricula, grading, and testing). KWON concentrates on Tier II which is an individualized, intervention level. Tier III is an intensive, skill specific intervention designed for each student. This includes Title I, Special Education, and one to one sessions conducted with teachers. All students participating in Tier II and III are monitored to ensure students' progress over time and close the achievement gap with their peers.

Highly Qualified Status of Instructional Staff

32 of the 33 instructional staff are licensed and Highly Qualified. The last teacher is currently in the process of finishing her State Approved Teacher Education Program (SATEP) and completing her Praxis tests in order to obtain licensure and is scheduled to obtain her license by the end of SY10-11. 50% of KWON teachers hold graduate degrees in education from schools such as Gonzaga, Chaminade, and the University of Hawaii.

KWON's environment molds students' early experiences through native educators who understand and pass on all that is good in our native, cultural value system. The school has purposefully sought out highly qualified, Native Hawaiian educators who come from the community. Of the school's faculty members, 63% have advanced degrees, and 20 of 41 members of the staff are graduates of the Kamehameha Schools, a private school exclusively for Native Hawaiians which is difficult to gain acceptance from. KWON thrives on the premise that this type of role modeling empowers the student body to believe that they can achieve and that all things are possible.

Professional Development Activities

All KWON Professional Development (PD) activities are geared toward the increase of effective instruction. The focus of PDs at KWON is enrichment, differentiation, and skill specific instruction that is scientifically proven and data driven.

Cultural workshops connect our staff and students to the wealth of ancestral knowledge available to us. The cultural workshops also enrich the relationships among our staff and students through the focus on our Na Mea Waiwai (core values: respect, responsibility, safety, humility, unity and perseverance). Activities such as creating kikepa (Hawaiian garb), kahili (Hawaiian version of a flag), and learning new 'oli (Hawaiian songs) are conducted on a consistent basis. Historical background, personal and academic connections, and staff unity are always at the forefront of all cultural workshop activities.

KWON teachers attend Kamehameha Schools' professional development days in order to learn and implement new strategies in their classrooms. KWON teachers attended an I Teach K Conference, Singapore Math Training Conference and a Differentiation Conference for which all teachers completed a collaborative project and presented statistical and anecdotal results reflecting the worth of attending the conference. All strategies and trainings are conducted within the framework of student achievement in order to close the achievement gap and increase academic achievement.

All teachers participate in Professional Learning Communities on a weekly basis. These communities work toward (1) recognizing a need (with a focus on leadership training), (2) organizing for change (with a focus on leadership and infrastructure), (3) working on the building blocks (with a focus on infrastructure, school philosophy, and vision), (4) moving as a whole school (with a focus on the standards based change process), (5) sharing results within a professional learning community (with the focus on assessment results), (6) implementing the curriculum (with a focus on teacher-developed curriculum guides), and (7) engaging students and families (with the focus on portfolios, student self-assessment, and goal setting). Initially, the communities' meeting topics began with an assessment (by way of surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews, along with data collection) of three components of our school: infrastructure, classroom practices, and student outcomes. According to the results of the assessment, consistent professional

development workshops were created and conducted. These workshops cover topics such as standards-based education, formative assessment to inform instruction, and the employment of instructional strategies across the schoolwide curriculum, all in the context of Professional Learning Communities. These communities are created and fostered not only to affect change through a partnership among the teachers but to sustain that change through grassroots involvement. We are continuing the growing process of refining our school curriculum, benchmarks, and anchor pieces for each benchmark. The communities also determine the expectations for each grade level through specific methodologies that are scientifically-proven to be effective. Through these Professional Learning Communities, teachers who are effective/knowledgeable in different areas instruct other teachers through professional workshops. These Grade Level PLCs also function as the teacher mentoring program through consistent meetings that discuss each teacher's strengths and needs in order to allow seasoned and beginning teachers to learn from one another. These learning communities allow teachers to receive the support they need to improve their classroom practices and give them adequate time to work together, both scientifically-proven necessities for classroom success. KWON has an extensive Support Services System that supports underperforming students with skill specific, individually designed instruction. The support system provides current, best practice reading and math strategies in the following areas: sustaining improved reading outcomes through phonics interventions, data analysis/data driven instruction from formative and summative assessments in order to target core reading and math strands for increased test results, RTI/Tier III reading interventions, teaching creatively to increase standardized test scores, metacognitive and multi-sensory interventions, motivating reluctant learners, and the use of technology in the classroom. KWON's closed circuit television plays professional development DVDs that contain Best New Practices and innovative teaching strategies for teacher utilization on a consistent basis. KWON also continues to build a professional development library available for the KWON staff in the Curriculum Room. This room houses texts, CD's, and DVD's that equip teachers with current strategies and methods that engage students in order to increase student achievement.

KWON also offers Apple Institutes for Mac Software and Internet Programs Training for instructional staff. Training is for Apple Software and Internet Programs for supplemental, differentiated, skill specific, data driven reading and math instruction in the form of project based digital storytelling which increases test scores through multi-sensory literacy and math comprehension strategies, vocabulary and language development, and repeated reading/math practice. These PD days cover best instructional strategies by instructing teachers in how to best use the programs for differentiating for each student using skill specific software and internet reading and math programs.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Kamehameha Schools-Kamehameha Schools' Ho'olako Like Program as well as Kamehameha Elementary School (KES) supports KWON by financially supporting the school's initiatives and providing the staff with opportunities for professional development (teacher trainings at the KES campus on literacy, conferences for Math and English Teachers, and workshops concerning topics such as differentiation). The Public Education Division of the Kamehameha Schools supports KWON through a longitudinal study that will track the long term effects of KWON's educational efforts through High School and beyond. This will help KWON address academic strengths and/or weaknesses that appear later in our students' academic career. KS also donated \$5000 in cultural books for our Backpack Program to begin in SY 10-11.

Hawaii Association of Independent Schools is partnering with KWON to assist in the process of accreditation with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. KWON began the process in SY 11-12.

Na Lei Na'auao Native Hawaiian Charter School Alliance-KWON is a member of the Na Lei Na'auao which offers support among 12 Native Hawaiian Charter Schools.

Hawaii Charter School Network-The 31 charter school network provides opportunities for KWON to learn from other charter schools throughout the islands.

University of Hawai'i at Manoa, College of Education, Center on Disability Studies-Collaborates

with KWON through the financial support of four free after school reading and math tutoring programs. These four programs focus on reading and math fluency. Currently, 200 of the 572 students at KWON attend these programs on a daily basis.

Hawaii State Teachers Association-Supports the teachers of KWON through union labor representatives that keep the staff aware of changing state laws that affect teachers.

Department of Education-Provides Financial Management Services for payroll, SPED services and trainings, as well as counseling referrals that require Department of Health involvement.

University of Hawaii Curriculum Research Development Group-Provides core science curriculum (DASH)

PDERI (Professional Development and Educational Research Institute) provides opportunities for professional development for our staff.

Alu Like collaborates with KWON by donating hundreds of books to build our school library.

Office of Hawaiian Affairs financially supports KWON through grants that allow for our free bus service.

Department of Hawaiian Home Lands agreed to a minimal cost, 30 year lease agreement with KWON to ensure KWON's long term support and success.

Disney granted KWON a 2500 sq. ft. playground and a 1000 sq. ft garden in the 2010-11 school year. Disney continues to support KWON through additional grants and school visits from Mickey and Minnie.

HeadStart applications are distributed during the school year for siblings of students to encourage pre-school attendance.

Queen Liliuokalani Children's Center, The Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture (INPEACE), Parents and Children Together (PACT), and Families for R.E.A.L. (the State Student Support Services Program) are all resourced as needed.